FELLOWSHIP IN PRAYER

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If not here, where? If not now, when?

– Hillel

Since 1949 the purpose of Fellowship In Prayer is to promote the practice of prayer among all religious faiths whose fundamental belief is in God regardless of race, creed, or color, and whose tenets include the universal attributes of truth, honesty, justice, and mercy, that thereby there may arise a closer relation to Almighty God and a deeper spirit of fellowship among mankind.

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Our cover: Le Nouveau Ne by Georges de la Tour reprinted with the permission of Musee de Rennes, France.

Christmas began in the heart of God. It is complete only when it reaches the heart of man.

Reuben Musey

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"For a world united in prayer"

Words of Wisdom

Because the same One, who is begotten and born of God the Father without ceasing in eternity, is born today within time, in human nature, we make a holiday to celebrate it. St. Augustine says that this birth is always happening. And yet, if it does not occur in me, how can it help me? Everything depends on that.

– Meister Eckhart

Then Moses said to God, "If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' what shall I say to them?" God said to Moses, *"I am who I am."* And he said, "Say this to the people of Israel, *'I am* has sent me to you.' "

(Exodus 3:13,14)

The Greek word for prayer means "to wish for." The German word for prayer means "to beg." The English word means "to entreat, implore, ask earnestly or supplicate, beg." The Hebrew word is t'phila. Its root is pallal, which means "to judge." The act of praying in Hebrew is hitpallel, the reflexive form of the verb; it means "to judge oneself." It signifies self-examination, an inquiry into the state of one's soul, to make it ready for communication with God.

– Rabbi Albert S. Goldstein

"The Truth is independent of outward forms. It shines brightly in the tavern as in the mosque or the church: moreover the religion of the heart which alone has value, is not the monopoly of any particular creed. In reality all creeds are one. . . ."

Rumi

Editorial: Winter 1984

It has been a wonderful autumn here in New Jersey, warm and dry, without the shearing winds that usually strip the trees and move us into winter. As I write, in mid-November, the Japanese maples have just caught fire from the first few nights of deep chill, and afternoon walks in the forest are still a matter of sweaters and low warm sunlight. This will change.

There is a measure of comfort in the progress of the natural world. In the midst of constant change, it is easy to feel an under-current of harmony and unity, and to look with some equanimity on the other generations as they rise and fall and rise again to play their alloted roles in subtle variation. We can look at the forest and its seasons without judgment. Can we do the same when we confront ourselves in the silence of the night?

How dearly we love our fears and visions. How dearly we hold our fantasies. How small they are, and how they dwarf and twist us, drawing away the energy and wonder from our lives.

We have such special knowledge – each of us an expert on the precise terms, and means, and qualities of our pleasure. We are adepts at definition--loving and quarreling over justice, truth, and goodness, bound fast to our words and our intentions. Dying slowly under the weight of judgments we feel obliged to make. Hoping for the best. . .

Our religious traditions in the west have a thread within them that is particularly disturbing when we begin to examine them for hints about how we, specifically, might live. Our faiths are rooted in obedience. Everywhere in our scriptures, in the lives of our saints and prophets, the message is the same – in our pride lies our destruction. Our faiths make plain that truth and peace are the gifts of a God of infinite compassion who loves and sustains creation. Our freedom and our responsibility is not to make meaning, but to accept it, and to explore and serve the wonder of a love that we can never exhaust or comprehend.

Our story is always the same. Out of the desolation of our plans, our victories and defeats, surrender to the overpowering mystery of our lives. We are bowed and we begin to heal.

EM

Readers are encouraged to send us the names and addresses of those who would like to receive future issues of Fellowship In Prayer. This bi-monthly publication is available at no charge to anyone who requests it. Please write or telephone our office during business hours: Fellowship In Prayer, 134 Franklin Corner Road, Lawrenceville, New Jersey 08648. Telephone (609) 896-3636. We will be happy to hear from you.

HOW SHOULD GOD REVEAL HIMSELF?

God decided to reveal himself to a king and a peasant. He sent an angel to inform them of the blessed news.

"O King," the angel announced, "God has deigned to reveal Himself to you in whatever manner you wish. In what form do you want Him to appear?"

Seated on his throne and surrounded by awe-struck subjects, the King proclaimed, "How else would I wish to see God, save in his Majesty and Power? Show Him to us in the full glory of his Kingship!"

God granted this wish and appeared as a bolt of lightning that instantly pulverized the King and his court. Nothing, not even a cinder, remained.

The angel then manifested himself to a peasant, saying: "God deigns to reveal Himself to you in whatever manner you desire. How do you wish to see God?"

Scratching his head and puzzling a long while, the peasant finally said, "I am a poor man and not worthy to see God face to face. But if it is His will to show Himself to me, let it be in those things with which I am familiar. Let me see God in the earth I plough, the water I drink, the food I eat. Let me see God in the faces of my family and neighbors."

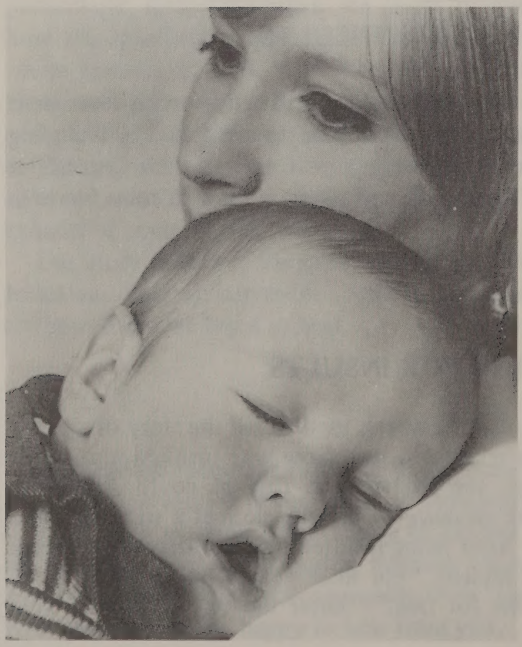
God granted the peasant his wish, and he lived a long and happy life. May God grant you the same!

PAYING BACK INSULTS

Attar of Nishapur, a great Sufi teacher, told of the time when Jesus went for a walk and was insulted by some townfolk. Jesus responded by including these townfolk in his prayers. "Why didn't you answer their insults?" a disciple asked. Jesus replied, "I can only pay people back with coins I have in my purse."

PAYING FOR INSULTS

John, one of the Christian desert fathers, used to tell the story of a philosophy student required by his teacher to pay those who insulted him. After three years of this treatment, the student was told to go to Athens to complete his education. At the entrance to the city he met a wise man who insulted everyone passing by. After being insulted, the student only laughed. When asked why, the student replied, "For three years I have paid to be insulted, and now you insult me for free." "Enter the city," the wise man replied. "Athens is yours."



Children are the figs
that satisfy the sweet tooth
in the mouth of life.

William Walter
De Bolt

Look For Him

by Emily Sargent Councilman

(With a shepherd father and his small son in the year AD 10 at night on a Judean hillside)

Father?

Not yet asleep, Nathan? Short legs need rest after this stretched-out day. Dawn comes soon to a shepherd's son as small as you.

But Father, I can't sleep. The stars – they look so near . . . and the sky . . .

Yes, I know. Cover your eyes with your mantle, my son, and sleep. Tomorrow will bring many hours of rough desert crossing before green pastures and the taste of fresh water for parched throats – man and beast.

But Father–

I know. This night – and the first time for you like this. I do not wonder your eyes refuse to close. How quiet the flock, the men in sleep. How near the silent stars.

Oh, yes, Father. Almost near enough to touch, to hold in my hand, as if God had scattered a million pieces of light all over the whole world. But – but I really can't touch them, hold them, can I?

Stars are not for touching and holding with hand, Nathan. They are for looking up to, for –

I know, Father, for giving light – like helping you to find the lost ewe last night. If there had been no stars, no moon, could you have found her?

It would have been difficult.

And like they helped on that special night for some of you to find the Christ Child in the stable at Bethlehem. Father, will you tell me the story again before I sleep?

Again, Nathan? you never tire of hearing the story do you? Nor I the telling. Come then. We will replenish the fire, but softly so as not to waken the others. You did well today, my son, keeping up with the men, the flock. Next time I take you with me your mother need not follow you with anxious eyes. You did well. But the story – yes. It was such a night as this and mine the watch as now when the strange unearthly light filled the whole world with a kind of silent music. It was a light that made the night as bright as day, every leaf and stone clear and shining – but softer

to the eye as moonlight is softer than sunshine . . . all of it strange and terrifying to me, and to the others wakened by the silence and the light. When we fell to the ground in our fear, we heard the Voice, itself at once all silence and all music. "Be not afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all the people; for to you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. And this will be a sign for you: you will find a babe wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manager." The words – I could never forget them, never.

And then, Father?

Then the sound of singing as if the whole world were filled with music. But we heard the words of their singing and we feared no more. "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom he is pleased!" When the angels had gone, we asked one another, "Did you hear? Did you see?" Yes, we all heard, we all saw. It was not a dream. As one we knew we had to go at once to Bethlehem and find the child. We could not wait – we knew. But the flock – we knew we could never make it that night leading our sheep. Someone must stay with them, and we drew lots. Are you still awake, Nathan?

Of, yes, Father. And I knew it was your lot to stay. I wish – I wish I could have been with you that night as now. Was it very hard for you to stay?

It was hard. I felt as if a heavy stone were holding me down, pushing me into the earth, and this my only chance to break through the boundaries from earth to heaven. Yet as the night wore on, and as I looked up to the stars – as they are tonight, Nathan – it was almost as if the Voice, the song, and the light were with me still, and I with the others hurrying to Bethlehem and finding the child.

And then? They told you all about the Child when they came back, didn't they, Father?

Father, the Child Christ – He would be as old as I am now, big and strong. Do you, do you think I will ever see Him? Really see Him?

I cannot say. I did not see Him with these eyes of mine that night. Since then I've looked for Him everywhere I've gone – somethimes almost believing I had found Him, as just recently – a boy your size with light in His eyes – but no. I found He had not been born in Bethlehem. but Nathan, I do not understand it – what happens more and more often to me. It is – this is difficult to put into words. Nathan – it is . . . Whenever I look caringly enough into the face of anyone, child or person grown, in some strange way, I do see the Christ, I have found Him, no matter how well hidden behind the human mask. Strange, but real. As real as everything that happened that night, changing everything for me. Changing me

. . Look for Him tonight in the stars above you, my son. A tomorrow and every after tomorrow, I do believe you will find Him in every person you see, as you look for Him with love.

Yes, Father.

You do understand, Nathan – a child, and you do understand. Come now. Close your eyes and sleep beneath the silent stars that speak His name. Oh yes – how they found Him newborn in that stable-cave; how they told Mary, His mother, and Joseph of all that we had seen and heard here on the hillside; how the starlight streamed down on the Child, illuminating Him; and how they knelt on the straw and worshiped. I – Nathan, I found Him too that night.

I know, Father. Tonight, looking up to the stars and hearing you tell the story again, I feel as if I were there too with them, with you . . . as if I too had found the Child. Could that be?

Yes, my son. Do you remember the rest of the story? And what I found when I returned home after that night?

The part about me! Tell me again, tell me.

I found you, my son, born the same night as the Christ Child. When I looked at your mother, at you – I have not told you this before – when I looked at you, it was as if you and the Child were the same. That I still do not understand, and the thought sometimes frightens me a little.

FOOTPRINTS

One night a man had a dream. He dreamed he was walking along the beach with the Lord. Across the sky flashed scenes from his life. For each scene he noticed two sets of footprints in the sand – one belonging to him and the other to the Lord. When the last scene had flashed before him, he looked back at the footprints and noticed that many times along the path there was only one set of footprints in the sand. He also noted that this happened during the lowest and saddest times in his life. This really bothered him and he questioned the Lord. "Lord, You said that once I decided to follow You, You would walk all the way with me, but I noticed that during the roughest times of my life there was only one set of footprints. I don't understand why, when I needed you most, you deserted me." The Lord replied, "My precious child, I love you and I would never leave you. During your times of trial and suffering, when you saw only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."

Anonymous

Spiritual Summit Conference VI

Rabbi Samuel Silver and other friends of Fellowship in Prayer were invited to attend Spiritual Summit VI, which convened in Manhattan on October 9-11 under the auspices of the Temple of Understanding. This interfaith group was founded in 1959 by Mrs. Judith Hollister of Greenwich, Connecticut, in order to promote dialogue among all the world's religions and to serve the cause of peace.

The conference opened with a dazzling pageant at the Church of St. John the Divine – the largest cathedral in the world – which was filled to capacity. The audience responded warmly to addresses delivered by such diverse figures as the Dalai Lama, the right Reverend Paul Moore, Episcopalian Bishop of New York, Dr. Robert Miller, assistant secretary-general of the United Nations, Mrs. Hollister and William Stansmore, the organizers, Dom Helder Camara, a retired Archbishop from Brazil, and many more.

For the next two days, religious leaders met at the Church Center of the United Nations to discuss the theme, "One is the Human Family." The need for unity and understanding, especially in the face of growing militarism, was stressed throughout the conference. William Stansmore noted that the vision shared by the Temple of Understanding and all the world's religions was feelingly expressed by Albert Camus:

"Great ideas sometimes slip into the world as gently as doves. Perhaps if then we listen attentively, we can hear beyond the tumult of empires and nations the soft flutter of wings, the gentle stirrings of life and of hope. Some say that hope is born in a nation, others in a man. But I believe that it is revived, sustained, and nurtured by millions of solitary individuals whose deeds and actions every day negate the crudest frontiers of history, thus insuring that each man on the basis of his own suffering and of his own joy is involved and working for all."

In the beginning there was no need to ask for anything. Enough was placed within creation to sustain life. We native people had no need to ask for anything; we gave thanks that all life performed its duties and followed the original instructions given it.

But now the time has come that we have to seek help. The time has come that we have to ask the Great Spirit, the Creator of this great mystery, for that which in all our history we never had to ask for. We have to ask for some kind of help and guidance, for peace, for world peace. . .

Phillip Deere
Elder of the Muskogee Nation

Right now, human beings are giving ridiculous demonstrations of power, incredible demonstrations of egotism. We are proud because we have many times the power to destroy life on earth. As a demonstration of the ridiculous, this is the maximum. But when the destruction of this planet is seen from the viewpoint of the universe, where millions of worlds are millions of times bigger than the earth, it appears like extinguishing the light of a candle when the sun announces the arrival of midday. We are repeating the error of Ptolomy who imagined that millions and millions of worlds were created simply for the joy of the human eye.

– Archbishop Helder Camara

The air is thick with foreboding. . . .yet those of us who tread the inner path must keep faith amidst the encircling gloom. Thousand of years ago a great seer of the Upanishads proclaimed in ecstacy, "I have seen the Great Being, shining in splendor, on the other shore beyond the darkness." Let us all open our deepest selves to the light so that our beautiful planet, so lovely and yet so fragile, will not become a burned out cinder but a cradle of the greater man reflecting the power and glory of higher consciousness.

– Dr. Karan Singh

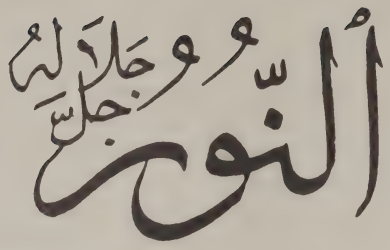
The most powerful obstacle to compassion is anger. Anyone who wants to develop peace of mind first must make the attempt to control or to minimize anger. Anger is the real destroyer of inner peace, and ultimately, of world peace. Therefore, in every day life, check yourself, when you see anger rising. Be vigilant and control it.

H. H. the Dalai Lama

The time has come when humans must again lift their hearts and spirits into the universe and into eternity. We must do spiritually with our hearts and souls what the scientists have done with their instruments and with their intelligence. There is no need that we should be successful only scientifically and materially. The religions have much to offer. . . they all speak about eternity and about the universe. . .if the religions can cooperate with the world community, I believe that in coming decades we will be able to make again out of this planet what it was always meant to be. . .a planet of God. . .

Dr. Robert Muller
Assistant Secretary General, UN

For further information about the Temple of Understanding and its work, or to order transcripts of the proceedings of "Spiritual Summit VI," please write to THE TEMPLE OF UNDERSTANDING 145 East 32nd St. (8th Floor), N.Y., N.Y. 10016.



Pervigilium Stellarum

After vespers I walked down
to the river and watched the full moon
reflected on the cool waters

the light like Persian script
swirling vibrant and alive

a hymn spun out of light
floating upward with me or without me
for as long as moon and river last

I thought why not be glad?

Climbing the hill through the dark orchard
I looked up and saw the Dipper
poised above the abbey's lights

and seeing such abundance
pour down from all that
emptiness between the stars

what could I do but laugh?

"Inquire Within"

"Keep running, athlete, and do not be afraid.'

– *John Klimakos,* The Ladder of Divine Ascent

I have found that, to stay healthy, the spirit needs exercise, just like the body. Merely reading about prayer does as little good as merely watching sports on television. But how does one work out spiritually? When Paul advised that we "run with perseverance the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:2), he obviously wasn't advocating jogging or marathon running, although his Roman contemporaries were just as addicted to physical fitness as we are; what he did recommend was the self-discipline of the athlete (1 Cor. 9:24). Each morning my neighbor, who styles himself a pagan, gets up at 6:00 a.m. and runs in place for half an hour. Yet I often am too undisciplined to set aside half an hour a day to sit quietly and let God give my spirit the workout it needs.

Spiritual flabbiness is a problem which, unlike bodily flabbiness, cannot be cured by hard work or an effort of will. In fact, to achieve spiritual health, one must be willing to do nothing. For most of us, however, to "let go and let God" is easier said than done. Almost from birth, we are programmed to act and react in response to an unceasing barrage of stimuli. Phones ring, radios and televisions blare, people opportune, and every where the message is the same: get, spend, give, take, decide, reconsider, but above all, do something!

Instead of asking who you are, people ask, "What do you do?" And if you're doing nothing, you're obviously a nobody.

Paradoxically, the more one tries to *be* someone by *doing* something, the more likely one is to end up feeling like a thing, or worse, like a nothing.

It is this losing battle with ego-centered activism that drives many people to seek out places to be quiet. Traditionally, these training camps for Being rather than Doing have been called monasteries or hermitages. Now they are often called retreat or meditation centers. And they are as urgently needed, and as sought after, as ever.

The idea of going to such centers may seem strange at first. When I first decided to visit a monastery, many of my colleagues thought I was crazy. I have since learned that, if I am crazy, at least I am in good company. Each year tens of thousands of Americans from virtually every religious background visit various religious centers in hopes of deepening their spiritual lives. Many spend from several days to several weeks emulating the simple, no-nonsense lifestyle of monks: rising at daybreak, praying or meditating at regular intervals, sharing simple communal meals, working, reading, reflecting, and, above all, being quiet. Most are delighted to discover how refreshing it is not to be obliged to make, or listen to, small talk. How liberating it is to simplify one's life and unclutter one's mind. How different the monastic world is from the frantic, phony, ego-ridden world of "resorts" where everyone feels pressured to have a good time, and where "recreation" means mindless distraction, not a re-making of the spirit. Many find a monastic "vaca-

tion" (literally emptying) so rewarding they become lay or associate members of an order.

During recent travels to Holy Cross (an Episcopalian monastery in West Park, N.Y.), the Providence Zen Center, and the Muhaiyadeen Fellowship (a Sufi center in Philadelphia), I met teachers, students, lawyers, government officials, business people and workers, all of whom had decided they needed a deeper and more meaningful vacation than a consumer society offers. Although doctrinally Zen Buddhism, Episcopalianism and Islam have little in common, the daily routine at each place was remarkably similar, as was the basic principle that guided our practice. Putting aside Individualism, the sacred cow of Western society, we joined together in a community committed to the belief that love and compassion are better incentives to social growth than greed and self-interest.

However naive or utopian the monastic ideal may seem, spiritual communities function remarkably well and throughout history have helped to civilize society at large. Monastic communities antedate all modern forms of social organization, and will no doubt be around long after our current nation-states have become obsolete. Civilizations based on self-interest always self-destruct sooner or later, but spiritual communities can continually renew themselves.

Fortunately, one doesn't have to be perfect or even special to visit such a community. To the contrary, the more special you feel you are, the more likely it is you'll be unhappy at a spiritual retreat. As a novice monk put it, "We have come here to share our weaknesses, not just our talents – to risk being ourselves, not just what we feel we ought to be."

Finding out who we are, instead of what we should be, is, I believe, the first step in finding out what we ought to do with our lives. Learning to deal with solitude and silence is not an end in itself, but a prelude to meaningful, truth-centered action in the world. If you're willing to risk being yourself, and feel the need of a spiritual work-out, don't be afraid to check in to your local monastery.

Anthony Manousos

Dr. Manousos has become the new editorial associate of Fellowship in Prayer. *Beginning in late February, 1985, he plans to travel around the country visiting monasteries, hermitages, and meditation centers. If you would like him to visit your center, or if you would like him to speak at your local prayer fellowship group, please contact the fellowship to discuss arrangements.*

Imagine two children playing hide-and-seek; one hides but the other does not look for him. God is hiding and man is not seeking. Imagine His distress.

Hershele Ostropoler as quoted by Elie Wiesel

Centers of Interest

(The following list only begins to suggest the richness and variety of spiritual practices and ways to which people are being led. If you have information to share, please contact us.)

The Light Center

A two-story, white geodesic dome surrounded by the beautiful mountains of western North Carolina. In all seasons this quiet and peaceful setting adds to the Center's purpose of increasing Light and Love through continual prayer for the world. Techniques using Light, prayer, and music have been developed to assist people in being effective in all situations. Weekend workshops are held to concentrate on aspects of prayer, personal development and the betterment of mankind. For a free copy of the Effective Prayer or more information, Write of call: United Research, P.O. Box 1146, Black Mountains North Carolina 28711, (704) 669-5845.

Osage+Monastery: A Christian ashram

"Yesu, Yesu, Jay Jaya Namo" (Jesus, Jesus, I praise and adore) . . . Thus begins Morning Praise at 5:45 a.m. in this small contemplative monastery situated in the midst of an oak forest just northwest of Tulsa. Established by the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, and drawing spiritual sustenance from Eastern, Native American and Christian sacred traditions, O + M has welcomed guests from all religious persuasions throughout the U.S. and the world. Its purpose is to maintain an atmosphere of contemplative prayer and action, to call all comers to personal growth and unswerving attention to the Presence in all creation, and to provide joyous hospitality and spiritual direction to all who desire it. O+M also encourages East-West dialogue. Arrangements to visit can be made by calling (918) 245-2734 or writing to Osage+Monastery, R. D. 1, Box 3843, Sands Springs, Oklahoma 70463.

Temenos: a Quaker-Buddhist spiritual growth center

Built over the healing mineral waters and rock foundations of a nineteenth-century spa, Temenos (an ancient Greek word signifying sacred space) connects ancient lore with present and future concerns for our planet. The daily life of Temenos reflects the convergence of Buddhist and Quaker practice, shared Silence and physical work, active non-violence in conflict resolution, closeness to earth and the elements, faithfulness to Truth in human relationships. For information, write to Joe and Teresina Havens, Box 84-A Star Route, Shutesbury, MA 01072.

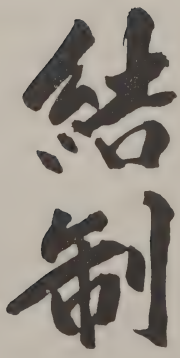
For information about monasteries, retreat centers, and New Age communities, the following directories are recommended:

An Ecumenical Directory of Retreat and Conference Centers. Boston: Jarrow Press, 1974. Philip Deemer, ed. A useful guide to several thousand Christian retreat and conference centers throughout the United State and Canada. Includes monasteries, colleges, camps.

Houses of Prayer: Annual Directory. (Crux publications: Albany, N.Y.) Up-to-date and well organized directory of several hundred Catholic retreat centers and "houses of prayer" (a concept originated by Thomas Merton). Listings also include spiritual focus or specialty of each center, i.e. Carmelite, charismatic, contemplative, eastern, ecumenical, eremetical, eucharistic, Franciscan, inner city, scriptural, etc.

A Pilgrim's Guide to Planet Earth: Traveler's Handbook and Spiritual Directory. San Rafael, California: Spiritual Community Publications, 1981. Parmatma Singh Khalsa, ed. With introduction by Edgar D. Mitchell (Apollo Astronaut). Contains listings and articles about monasteries, ashrams, temples, mosques, synagogues, etc. A comprehensive survey of religious places and worship practices "from China to Peru."

The New Consciousness Sourcebook. Parmatma Singh Khalsa, ed. Introductions by Marilyn Ferguson and Daniel Ellsberg. Spiritual Community Publications, Box 1067, Berkeley CA 94701, 1982. A guide to New Age centers and communities in the United States and Canada, with an emphasis on the peace movement.



Coming empty-handed, going empty handed – that is human.
When you are born, where do you come from?
When you die, where do you go?
Life is like a floating cloud which appears.
Death is like a floating cloud which disappears.
The floating cloud itself originally does not exist.
Life and death, coming and going, are also like that.
But there is one thing which always remains clear.
It is pure and clear, not depending on life and death.

Then what is the one pure and clear thing?

KYOL CHE
Retreat

Kwan Um Zen School

Once Upon A Time In New Jersey . . . . An Afternoon With A Spiritual Storyteller

Fellowship in Prayer hosted two visits by Fuard Uduman and members of the Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship. On September 22, in a quiet beech grove near the Friends Meeting House of Princeton, N.J., twenty or so people of all ages and backgrounds gathered to hear this mystical author and Sufi storyteller from Sri Lanka (Ceylon). Response to his talk was so positive that he returned on October 20 to speak at the Third World Center, where he was warmly received by students and townsfolk.

Sufism, which according to some sources began during the ninth century, was one of the most important spiritual movements to arise in the Middle East in recent times. Sufis helped weave Hellenistic philosophy, Persian dualism, Christian mysticism, the Kabbalah, and various Indian beliefs and practices into the fabric of Islam. The result was a way of life, and of seeing reality, that is both mystical and practical. Humorous or paradoxical stories are often used by Sufi teachers to convey profound truths.

Sufism is not a separate sect or religion. Among ordinary people of the Near East, the word Sufi connotes saintliness, a title that genuine practitioners are unwilling to claim for themselves. The way of the Sufi is too tolerant and too humorous to please many nationalists and sectarians. "All the prophets and teachers point to the same truth," explained Dr. K. Garnesan, a member of the Sufi fellowship to which Fuard belongs, "but many of their followers prefer to worship the finger rather than the truth to which it points."

Wearing a traditional white cap and smoking Balkan Sobranies (James Bond's favorite cigaret), Fuard Uduman is solidly built and genial – hardly one's stereotype of 'a mystic author' (which is how he is described on the dust jacket of his book, *Seeker on the Path*). Besides being a family man with five daughters, Fuard manages a security service in Ceylon that employs several thousand men, many highly skilled in martial arts. A warm-hearted man of great strength, both inner and outer, Fuard captivated his audience by telling Sufi stories, samples of which follow:

A man kept a song bird in a golden cage and pampered it with dainties and sweet talk. Despite this treatment, the bird grew unhappy and ceased to sing. When the man asked, "What can I do to make you happy again?" the bird replied, "Go to the jungle and send my greetings to all my relatives and friends. Then tell me exactly what happens." The man complied with the bird's wish and went to the jungle to convey greetings. All the birds listened attentively. Then one issued a piercing cry and dropped dead. Puzzled, the man went back home and, with some hesitation, told his bird exactly what had happened. The bird, hearing how his friend responded, also dropped dead. The man was so shocked and grief-stricken he could not bring himself to

bury his pet. Instead he left it on the window sill. As soon as a breeze blew, the dead bird fluttered its wings and flew away back to the jungle.

"The bird is the soul," Fuard explained, "which has been caught and imprisoned by the world. However much it is pampered, it yearns for freedom. The birds in the jungle are his spiritual friends. When he hears that one of them has died to selfishness, he too dies to self. This is the only way to recover life and freedom."

Fuard compared this remedy to the one prescribed by Christ ("Whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it" – Mt. 16:25) and many other mystical teachers. According to the Sufis, dying to self is made easier by associating with like-spirited friends and an enlightened teacher.

The ideal teacher, Fuard explained, is often obscure and uneducated. He told of a distinguished professor who had mastered all the branches of learning and decided he needed time to relax. He hired a boatman to take him to a nearby island. As the boatman rowed away from shore, the professor asked him what kind of education he had received. "My father was a poor man," the boatman said, "and could not afford to send me to school. I cannot read or write. I am just a simple boatman." "That is a shame!" the professor said sarcastically, "half your life has been wasted." A few minutes later, as they reached the middle of the channel, a squall blew up and threatened to capsize the boat. "Master, you must jump overboard," the boatman said, "and swim for your life." "I can't," the professor replied, "I never learned how to swim." "That is a shame," the boatman replied. "Your whole life has been wasted. You will surely drown."

According to the Sufis, the way of truth requires humility, not specialized knowledge or achievements. Those who practice aceticism and pretend to "higher knowledge" are sometimes the butt of Sufi humor. As people waited for lunch, Fuard told of a Sufi who spent time with an ascetic concerned with the oneness of life and the importance of not harming any life form. The ascetic said finally, "You have been here for a week and listened to me, but you have not shared any of your own wisdom. What do you have to teach?" "Well, once my life was saved by a fish," the Sufi replied. "That sounds like a curious tale," the ascetic said. "You must tell me how you were saved by a fish." "I was starving and I ate it," the Sufi replied.

Although Sufis do not make a fetish of any special practice, such as vegetarianism, they are concerned about attachments, however trivial, if they separate us from our true selves. Fuard told of a hermit who couldn't stand the noise and trouble of town life. So he gave away all his possessions and went to live in the jungle. All he owned were two pieces of cloth, one for his loins, and another for washing. As he slept under a tree, one of his cloths was nibbled by a rat. Annoyed, the hermit went out and got a cat. This kept the rats away, but when the cat started mewing, the hermit realized it needed milk, so he purchased a cow. Each morning the cow mooed to be milked, and so the hermit hired a boy. The boy complained that he needed a place to live, and so the hermit built a cottage. Soon the hermit found himself surrounded with animals and people clamoring for his attention, so one night he took off his loin cloth and stole away into the woods stark-naked.

Fuard ended his talk by explaining that if we really want to understand the truth, we must not let timidity or self-consciousness stand in our way. To make his point, he told us the following story:

A student went to a teacher to find out how he had acquired wisdom.

"From a dog," the teacher responded.

"You're joking," the young man exclaimed. "How could a dog possibly teach wisdom?"

"When I was a young man," the teacher explained, "I was very eager to learn wisdom. I went to many teachers, read many books, fasted, prayed, but still was frustrated. 'I search continually for the truth,' I complained, 'but something always stands in my way. What can it be?' Just then I saw a thirsty dog peering into a clear pool, but unable to drink. It leaned over the edge, but always drew back. It sometimes barked and growled, or whimpered and whined, but it could not satisfy its thirst. Finally its thirst grew so great that leaped in and lapped up the water. 'So it is with me,' I realized, 'I was burning with thirst, but I was frightened by my own reflection. I, too, must surrender my fears and securities if I am to find satisfaction.'"

Fuard concluded by expressing the hope that we would all become immersed in the truth. He also suggested that we use stories to break the ice when we come into contact with people from different religious traditions. If you have a story that has been particularly meaningful to you, send it in and we will try to share it with others. For further information contact Bawa Muhaiyaddeen Fellowship, 5820 Overbrook Avenue, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania 19131, (215) 879-9960.

The best prayer is not for our own concern. The best prayer is when we forget ourselves and remember mankind; when we leave unremarked our own needs, when we do not ask: "O Lord, give me." But rather, "O Lord, transform me." Prayer is not so much talk with God as it is making ourselves ready to listen to him. Prayer is the way of setting down the burden. Prayer is the strength to carry the burden if there be no resting place. Prayer is the heart emptying itself of pain. Prayer is the heart replenishing itself from the ever-living source of God's caring.

There is a trio of stories that teach. The first, a shepherd prayed: "Lord

of the Universe: It is apparent to Thee that if Thou hadst cattle and gave them to me to tend, though I take wages for tending from all others, from Thee I would take nothing, because I love Thee, because I love Thee, O Lord." And the sage prayed: "I do not want Your heaven, nor am I afraid of your Hell. I want only you, O God." A Jew in a dream found himself in Heaven. "Where is Paradise?" he asked. So they showed him a room with a company of scholars sitting about a table in deep meditation. "Is this, then, Paradise?" he queried in disappointment. "You do not understand," they said to him. *"The sages are not in Paradise. Paradise is in the sages."*

Prayer is the ladder from man's holiness to God's holiness. Prayer teaches us that we cannot live only in the earth's dimensions. The human heart needs height, and the human spirit needs the mountain top and what lies beyond. Prayer lifts us away from the love of self and nearer to love of God. Upon the ladder of prayer, man's holiness, ascending unsurely, uncertainly, meets God's holiness descending in welcoming love. To light the flame of Paradise, prayer is the candle. Prayer is the rim of our world as holiness is the hub of our being, and from that centered holiness there radiates spokes of our life, its meaning, granting us treasures of love and the flourishing of friendship. So a person does not always need to talk to God in words. God translates man's wordlessness. He understands man's unspoken reaching-out.

A peasant, so runs the tale, used to come each day to the Sanctuary and sit there, quiet and unstirring, no word uttered. "What do you say to God during these long visits?" he was asked. "I say nothing to Him," the man replied. *"I look at Him and He looks at me, and joyful silence binds us together."*

Prayer is man's search and God's discovery. Prayer cherishes what is left in the bottom of our hearts and which cannot be expressed in speech. Prayer is our saying, "I search for Thee continuously." Prayer is God's answer, "I have found thee O man." Prayer is the end of the finite and the beginning of the infinite. May each of us, in prayer, discover God's closeness, and may we through prayer discover all men. For they are our brethren, everywhere on earth.

– Rabbi Jacob P. Rudin

The processes of history work slowly. There are no short cuts in creation. Things happen by the planting and sowing of seeds, and do not appear all at once. We must have humility of spirit to recognise how small, in a sense, is the success we can achieve in a single lifetime. We can't do it all. But what we can do is set things in their right direction, and I think that is beginning to happen. And as we do that, since life is universal and we don't control it, something far greater than ourselves begins to work. This puts at our disposal, late as the hour is, time enough for the right things to happen. There is always time enough, no matter how desperate it is, for the complete thing to happen.

Laurens Van der Post

FELLOWSHIP ACTIVITIES

The Fellowship will be sponsoring two more in our series of informal presentations during December. Reverend Dr. Demetrious J. Constantelos will speak about "The Inner Life and Eastern Orthodox Christianity" on Saturday, December 1, at the Princeton Friends Meeting on the corner of Princeton Pike and Quaker Road, in Princeton at 2 p.m. Born in Messenia, Greece, Dr. Constantelos has taught and lectured at many colleges and universities – including Harvard, Rutgers, Dartmouth, and the University of California at Santa Barbara – and has published numerous articles and books including *The Greek Orthodox Church* (1967), *Byzantine Philanthropy and Social Welfare* (1968), *Marriage, Sexuality and Celibacy, a Greek Orthodox Perspective* (1975), and *Understanding the Greek Orthodox Church* (1982).

John Stokes will give a talk entitled "Tracks of the Ancestors: Tracking, Nature Observation and Spiritual Life of Native Peoples" on Sunday, December 16, at 4:30 p.m. at the Third World Center (on the corner of Prospect and Olden Avenue). A native of America and graduate of Princeton University (class of '74), John Stokes apprenticed himself to one of Australia's leading trackers, a Pitjantjatjara Aborigine, to learn and to preserve some of the ancient survival skills and rich spiritual tradition that enabled the native Australians to live for thousands of years in balance with their environment. Since returning to North America, John has been an instructor at Tom Brown's Tracking and Wilderness Survival School in Asbury, New Jersey, teaching all phases of nature observation and ancient survival skills. His writings appear in *East West Journal, In Context, Raise the Stakes, and Sundance Dream Journal.*

A program of visits is being planned by the Executive Secretary this winter to areas where we have concentrations of readers. Plans are to locate a meeting place and to inform readers in the area by mail several weeks in advance of the date. Meetings will provide an opportunity for Followship readers to get to know one another personally, to worship together for a few moments, and to exchange information on our questions and interests. The Fellowship's Executive Secretary, Edward Miller, will be happy to arrange visits or informal talks with other groups, churches, etc. upon request. Please contact the office with your ideas, or to request further information.

The Surrender Group sponsored by the Fellowship In Prayer meets weekly at the Princeton Friends Meeting (School Building) on Thursday nights between 8 and 10 pm. All are welcome. Transportation and information are available by calling the Fellowship office (609) 896-3636 during business hours.

The Surrender Group is intended to be open to persons from a broad range of backgrounds, and is primarily concerned with practical ways through which we may learn "to surrender ourselves as the center of our lives and to accept Truth as the center, and thus to discover a way of life that brings meaning, affection, joy, and some measure of inward peace".

News of the Fellowship

Kathryn G. Brown, President and Co-Founder of the Fellowship in Prayer, underwent successful eye surgery on Nov. 15 and is now recuperating at the home of her sister in Suffern, N.Y.

Reuben L. Musey, vice-president and a member of the Board of Trustees of Fellowship in Prayer, recently was the recipient of the Civic Achievement Award in recognition of outstanding service to the greater Hagerstown, Maryland and Washington County, Maryland in support of the 350th anniversary celebration in honor of the founding of the state of Maryland.

Musey was the author of two historic stories that were published in the anniversary booklet.

The Spirit of Christmas

Again the Christmas season is upon us. These are the days of family festivity, of open-hearted generosity, and meetings with friends too long neglected. When we see Christmas so cluttered with wrappings and tinsel, there seems to be no room for the true meaning of Christmas, the birth of Jesus Christ. The pressures of preparation tend to obscure the splendor; and some of the world's most glorious music is cheapened by the playing of canned carols.

We must protect and intensify the meaning and precious heritage of this period. This is possible by recalling, dwelling upon, and applying the significance of this special period. In our tortured, tormented, war-torn world, how comforting, how calming, how wondrous to hear again the Story of His birth!

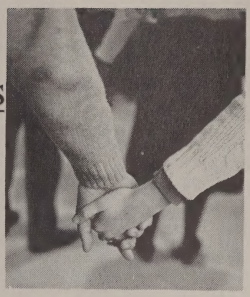
This sacred period rushes forward. Homes, churches, stores, offices are decorated with festive garlands; concerts are conducted whose glorious music makes one feel it must have been composed in the very presence of God.

As Christmas Day comes, people throughout the world kneel at the same Manager – some in peril of their lives for such worship – remembering again that eternal and personal promise, "Unto you . . . a Saviour." An age old story – but oh, so new! Eager minds listen reverently . . . "Unto Us a Child Is Born."

Reuben Musey

Resources

FOR INDIVIDUALS AND PRAYER GROUPS



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We live in a culture that is terribly afraid to listen, We'd prefer to remain deaf. The latin root of the word *deaf* is *absurd*. Prayer means moving from absurdity to obedience.

Henri Nouwen

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